

BACKSLIDING.

BY J. G. WINEY.

That there is a great deal of backsliding in this present age is apparent to all; as we hear from all sides and all churches and societies the complaint about members becoming cold and indifferent in their religious walks. This is not as it should be, and it is not desirable to any of our christian denominations, nevertheless it is true in the present age and has been in all ages since Christian churches have been established. There is a gospel ship and all who are in that ship and abide therein are perfectly safe. But Paul admonished the centurion and those that were with him in the ship, "except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Acts xxvii, 31.

What is it? "To fall off, to apostatize, to turn gradually from the faith and practice of christianity." Webster.

The causes for backsliding seem to be various and many and some indeed very frivolous and ungrounded. I open my Bible and refer to Jeremiah iii, I find that adultery was practiced greatly by backsliding Israel. "And I said after she had done all these things 'turn thou unto me. But she returned not and her treacherous sister, Judah, saw it.'" Now we see that God divorced Israel from him because of backsliding and committing crimes against his holy law. So will every backslider be divorced from him if he will not repent and return back again into the "ship."

Do Christians backslide? Yes, we find that Christians do sometimes backslide. But some one will say, "once in grace, always in grace." Let us see. I again open my Bible and read about Annanias and Sapphira, Acts v, 1, for a little gain in this world's goods not only backslid but lied to the Holy Ghost and were immediately struck dead by God's power. We have good reason to believe that this man and wife were once happy Christians.

Again we read of a Judas Iscariot who at least pretended to be a Christian and one who was one of the prominent disciples of the Lord, "because he had the bag" (treasurer) he was baptized, had his feet washed and had

partaken of the Lord's supper (but not the eucharist) and followed all the literal commands of the Lord; yet for a little greedy gain—money—thirty pieces of silver—he denied his Lord, hence backslid and committed suicide. From this we see that there is a possibility of Christians falling back into the elements of the world.

The dangers of backsliding. I will give a few of the many Scriptures that are given as warnings to the backsliders. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me * * * in tithes and offerings." Malachi iii, 8. "Ye are cursed with a curse." Verse 9. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned in his trespass that he hath trespassed and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Ezekiel xviii, 24. "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die." Verse 26. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." Luke ix, 62. Do not fail to read St Luke xi, 24-26. "If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned." John xv, 6. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x, 12. See also Phil. iii, 18; Col. i, 23; Tim. i, 19; vi, 21; Heb. iii, 12, 13; Heb. xii, 15. There are some hopeless cases, cases that there remain "no more sacrifice for sins." See Heb. vi, 4, 5, 6. Also Heb. x, 26, 27. 2 Peter ii, 20.

Looking at all the scriptures quoted, is it possible that those who had been truly converted can fall back? It does not look reasonable, but it is truth nevertheless. Do you know my dear fellow member, that you are backsliding when you habitually absent yourself from church, prayer meeting, social meeting, business council meeting, communion meeting, Christian Endeavor, or any other meeting where devotional services are had? Do you know, dear brother, that if you go

visiting on the Lord's day, especially at the time appointed for worship, that you are out of place and that you not only absent yourself from duty but that you also keep others from their duties? The Savior says, "watch!" The enemy is always on the alert, busy to throw in our paths stumbling stones to keep us from worshipping God. Do you know, dear sister, that when you sit away back in the church and do not take any part in the worship or even perhaps do not kneel in prayer that the indications are that you are at the verge of starting back? Do you know that if you frequently absent yourself from church that you greatly discourage your minister and that it is embarrassing to him to break the bread of life to the few present?

In conclusion I will say that as long as any one lives a true Christian life and attends to his Christian duty there is no possibility of backsliding but as soon as one becomes cold and negligent in his Christian duties he is beginning then and there to retrogress and just about that time satan will come and help him all he can to draw him away from the worship of God.

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ACCEPTED.

At a time when many were coming to Christ, a certain man said he wanted to be a Christian, but did not know how to come to Christ. A friend sent him a letter requesting him to call at his house at six o'clock that evening. He came promptly. "You believed my invitation, I see", said his friend. "Well, here is another invitation for you from one who is just as sincere and honest as I was." And he handed him a paper on which was written, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." After reading it slowly the seeker asked:

"Am I to believe that just as I believed your letter?"

"Yes," said his friend; "as you came to me without waiting to change your clothes, accept the other invitation just as you are."

"I will, I do!" he cried. Lord, here I am, ready for whatsoever thou dost want of me."—Selected.